

## Romanism Equivalent to Sedition.

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contentious age could rise to so rational and Christian a conception of religious liberty. Wherever either the Protestant or the Catholic was supreme, disability and persecution were the results. It must be said that censure and a fine of one shilling were remarkably mild punishments of Romanist dissent from the Anglican service. In Spain, France, the Netherlands, men and women were tortured and burned by a savage Inquisition for worshipping in accordance with conscience. And if conspiracy and revolt exposed many English Catholics to a harsher fate for the sake of their religion, it was not as martyrs of religious principle, but as rebels, that they incurred the penalty of treason with increasing facility. Plot after plot was hatched against Elizabeth's life and crown, and on behalf of her royal captive of Scotland, who was not only the object of chivalrous commiseration, but the hope of a Romanist restoration. Assassination was the weapon of the Jesuit conspirators, who worked in secret to compass the destruction of an excommunicated sovereign. And each plot only quickened the Protestant alarm, only steeled the Protestant determination to crush the secret enemy with all the rigour that legislation, in the interest of self-preservation, could devise. Hence the Acts of 1572, of 1581, of 1585, of 1587, of 1593, which showed an ascending scale of intolerance and severity. The Catholic might cry out in the name of liberty, but liberty has no true ring on the lips of assassins, or their abettors, on behalf of a foreign potentate. And it certainly requires a large meed of sophistry to be able to range the victims of allegiance to the pope among the martyrs of civil or religious liberty. Civil and religious liberty owed nothing to papist rulers like Philip II.; and if Philip had conquered England for the pope and himself, the Inquisition would have made short work, not only of English Protestantism but of English political institutions. Fortunately for political progress, the Spanish Philip and his mighty Armada did not succeed in making a second Spain of England.

Far otherwise was it in the case of the Recusants who, under the name of Puritans, challenged and suffered persecution for their resistance to the Act of Uniformity. The Puritans appealed to the Bible, the laws, conscience, in their